United Nations

Press Release

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TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Secretary-General asks former United States Secretary of State Cyrus Vance to be his Personal Envoy on Yugoslavia with a view to assist him in discharge of responsibilities entrusted to him by Security Council.

- Secretary-General, in statement at UNICEF/WHO ceremony, hails achievement of immunizing 80 per cent of children of the world, saying it is "an accomplishment of immense significance".

- General Assembly is addressed by Foreign Minister of Ethiopia, as well as by Permanent Representatives of Antigua and Barbuda, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Belize. Foreign Ministers of Comoros, Saint Lucia and Chad, as well as State Secretary for European Affairs and Agriculture of Belgium also address Assembly.

- Secretary-General in message to mark International Day for Natural Disaster Reduction says strategies for sustainable development must take into account vulnerability of countries to natural disasters.

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Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar announced today that he has asked Cyrus Vance to serve as his Personal Envoy on Yugoslavia with a view to assist him in the discharge of the responsibilities entrusted to him under Security Council resolution 713 (1991). Under that resolution, the Council had invited the Secretary-General to offer his assistance without delay, in consultation with the Government of Yugoslavia and the European Community, and to report to the Council.

Mr. Vance, who was the United States Secretary of State from 1977 to 1980, has agreed to assist the Secretary-General in his efforts.

Since the adoption of the resolution on 25 September, Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar has been personally in touch with the Government of Yugoslavia; the current Presidency of the European Community; the current Chairman of the States participating in the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE); and with Lord Carrington, who is the Chairman of the Hague Peace

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Conference on Yugoslavia; as well as with other interested parties. Mr. Vance will assist the Secretary-General in pursuing the above mentioned contacts and in the preparation of the report called for by the Council.

The Secretary-General told correspondents this morning that he would meet Lord Carrington on Thursday, 10 October. He was scheduled to meet today with the Permanent Representative of the Netherlands, whose country currently holds the Chairmanship of the European Community, and with the Permanent Representatives of Belgium, France and the United Kingdom.

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The Secretary-General today called the 80 per cent immunization coverage of young children -- the 1990 goal of Universal Child Immunization set by the international community in 1985 -- an "accomplishment of immense significance".

At a ceremony at Headquarters at which the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO) certified the goal, the Secretary-General said it was a "major step towards truly universal immunization against the foremost diseases which kill and maim the most vulnerable among us".

The next goal, Mr. Pérez de Cuellar said, was to immunize 90 per cent of the world's children by the year 2000 -- a goal set at the World Summit for Children last year.

The global immunization programme, which involves WHO, UNICEF and many other organizations in almost every country, vaccinated more than 100 million children in the developing world last year against measles, whooping cough, tetanus, polio, tuberculosis and diptheria.

Speaking at a press conference this afternoon, Executive Director of UNICEF James Grant said the global immunization programme was "the largest peacetime collaborative effort in world history". He also noted that the immunization levels for children under age one in the third world were now higher than those for children aged two in the United States and the United Kingdom.

Also present at the press conference, WHO Director-General Dr. Hiroshi Nakajima called the success of the immunization programme "a lasting accomplishment that will have an impact on humanity for decades to come".

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Opening this morning's General Assembly debate, the Permanent Representative of Antigua and Barbuda, Lionel Hurst, said that the island States of the world, aware of the unique environmental dangers which faced island populations, had united in the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), proposed by Trinidad and Tobago and chaired by Vanuatu. The mission of this alliance was to articulate a common position during the negotiations which should culminate in the Convention on Climate Change. As a member of this

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alliance, he said, Antigua and Barbuda, intended to live up to its responsibility in forging this Convention.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia, Seyoum Mesfin, spoke about what he called "the painful experience" of the past 17 years in Ethiopia with a "ruthless military".

He told the Assembly that his country had noted with sadness the "deafening silence of the United Nations system" in the face of gross violations of human rights in Ethiopia and its failure to make tangible efforts to stop the "terrorist regime". It was his Government's view that the United Nations should have spoken out with sufficient vigour, instead of "hiding behind a convenient excuse" to justify inaction. In contrast, Mr. Mesfin said, donor nations and non-governmental organizations had acted with tremendous dignity and compassion and had persisted in their determination to provide timely assistance to victims of drought and famine.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Jonathan Peters, told the Assembly that his country would continue to vigorously promote unification among countries of the Windward Islands of the Caribbean. He said current initiatives to establish a political union among the four Windward Islands represented a concerted attempt to merge the limited resources of these islands to create an enhanced environment for economic growth and development.

Mr. Peters also expressed his Government's support for the application of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) for observer status to the General Assembly, which will be taken up by the body on Wednesday, 16 October. He said the observer relationship with the United Nations would greatly enhance CARICOM's ability to coordinate the activities of its member States in areas of competence.

In his statement, the Permanent Representative of Belize, Carl Rogers, said that the recognition by the Guatemalan Government of the independence and sovereignty of Belize marked the beginning of a new chapter of mutual respect, dignity and cooperation between the two countries. He went on to say that the decision of his Government to adopt maritime legislation which extends the territorial sea of Belize to 12 miles, while maintaining the existing three mile territorial sea in the southern waters of Belize, had removed a source of potential friction and had guaranteed Guatemala's access to the Caribbean.

Speaking in this afternoon general debate, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Comoros, Said Hassane Said Hachim, said that for the past 16 years the question of the Comorian island of Mayotte had not found a satisfactory resolution, despite all the resolutions adopted to that end by the United Nations.

Mr. Hachim reiterated that his Government would pursue its unremitting efforts for the return of the island of Mayotte to the Federal Islamic Republic of the Comoros through a peaceful resolution of that issue and according to international law.

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In his statement, the Foreign Minister of Saint Lucia, Emmanuel Neville Cenac, said there was an urgent need, within the broad powers granted to the Security Council under Chapter VII of the Charter, "for an early warning mechanism to identify and react to emerging global issues before they reach the point of crisis".

The situation in Haiti, he said, was a case in point. Unless the military was replaced, there would be "no end to the tragic game of musical chairs being played with the lives of 6 million Haitians".

He said if President Aristide were to ask the United Nations to restore Haiti to democratic rule, Saint Lucia would "hasten to give an affirmative response to that request". In the meanwhile, he said, "all other legitimate means must be employed to quickly bring about a return to constitutional government in Haiti".

In his statement to the General Assembly, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Chad, Soungui Ahmed, said that since last year there had been an improvement in the relations between his country and Libya over the border dispute opposing the two nations. Libya and Chad, he said, had called on the International Court of Justice to arbitrate their litigation and had committed themselves to comply with its decision.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belgium, Paul De-Keersmaeker, spoke on the question of human rights, saying the international community had to provide itself with sufficient means to change the behaviour of States violating human rights when confidential procedures and pressure from public opinion remain ineffective. He said his country supports the role of the Security Council in these matters and proposed the creation of an International Court for Human Rights and the appointment of a High Commissioner as the most important possible innovation.

In a statement yesterday, the Permanent Representative of Rwanda, François Ngamkiyentwali, recalled that in October last year the armed forces from Uganda and the "National Resistance Army" invaded Rwanda and then were driven out. Justification for the attack, he said, was the supposed refusal of the Rwandan Government to allow Rwandan refugees to return to their country. A state of war had existed in Rwanda since that time, he added. Just months before the invasion, a third meeting between representatives of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) had taken place in Kigali and an agreement had been reached to conduct a survey of the refugees situation. Three solutions were offered, he continued, to the refugee problem: voluntary resettlement: naturalization in Uganda; a third possibility to be chosen by the refugees themselves. The negotiations were to be completed by January 1992.

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In a message to mark the International Day for Natural Disaster Reduction, the Secretary-General today called attention to the objective of the Decade for Disaster Reduction -- to reduce the immense loss of human life and destruction caused by natural disasters.

He called for the development and strengthening of national capabilities to reduce the impact of disasters. As the world focused increasingly on strategies for sustainable development, it must take into account the vulnerability of so many countries to natural disasters, he said. Tragically, this vulnerability had been underscored during the first two years of the Decade by volcanic eruptions in Japan and the Philippines, an earthquake in Iran, floods in China, and the devastating cyclone in Bangladesh.

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